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Slavic Peoples E16

For information on family life, child training, and obscenity among Slavic peasants, see 11: Malinowski, OL6 Trobriands, category 116, pp. 36-38, 40-44, 51-54, 64, 105.

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E16 Slavic Peoples

[For an historical background of the Slavic Peoples, especially concerning their migrations in and to the Ukraine, see 7: Bregy and Obolensky, RDI Ukraine, category 116, pp. 27-33.]

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Slavic Peoples E16

[For additional information on the origin and history of Slavic Peoples see: 4; Allen RDI Ukraine, cat. 116, pp. 41-52; 56-58;-- Analyst]

The Primitive Slavs

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It was to this district, centering about the city of Czernowitz, that many Polish officials and soldiers withdrew to escape German and Russian pursuit when Poland was invaded in 1939.

The Western Slavic group includes the Poles, the Czechs (or Bohemians) and Moravians, the Slovaks, and two Slavic islands in German territory: the Kashubs, who live on the Baltic coast northwest of Danzig, probably not over two hundred thousand in number, and a considerably smaller number of Sorbs, or Wends, who inhabit Lausitz, or Lusatia, a small area on the upper Spree river northeast of Dresden.

The Southern Slavs are cut off from their northern kindred by the Austrian Germans, the Magyars, and the Romanians, but comprise the Slovenes in the extreme northern part of Yugoslavia; the Serbs and the Croats, who differ from one another only in slight variations of dialect and by the fact that the Serbs belong to the Greek Orthodox church and use the Cyrillic Script (similar to the Russian), while the Croats are Catholics and use the Latin alphabet; and the Bulgarians who, though possessing a Slavic national language, represent a complex fusion of racial and linguistic stocks.

In view of the numerous and violent migratory movements which took place in northern Europe both before the Christian era and during the first few centuries after it began, the Slavs are hardly likely to have occupied their present extensive territory during their whole recorded history. On the contrary, their migrations cover a range almost as vast as those of their Germanic neighbors, and the location of their primitive habitat constitutes a problem which has long engaged students of Slavic history and linguistics.

The earliest native tradition dealing with Slavic origins is contained in the so-called Russian *Primary Chronicle*, a compilation completely extant only in two fourteenth-century texts, but which reproduce with considerable accuracy a work composed by a monk of Kiev about the end of the eleventh century. Here we read:

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tion that Hitlerite Germany adopted this discrimination as a creed. We have seen whither this folly led. A less dangerous, but more general, illusion leads historians to falsify the time-perspectives of the events they record by giving to the words 'national conscience' a racial import which is, more often than not, simply a gross anachronism. The most one can concede is that 'race' intervened as a disturbing element in international life at a time when the latter had, to all appearances, lost its homogeneity and its original authentication marks. The case of the Slavs is, in this respect, irrefutably eloquent. If we accept what the learned Genevan anthropologist, Professor Eugène Pittard,² has written, we lack precise information, and even clarity, regarding the original populations of the Slav countries; the data are too scanty for us to write their history on an anthropological basis and to establish definite relationships. Great Russians, White Russians and Little Russians present rather widely differing morphological characteristics. Neither does the Polish nation constitute a pure race. The Czechs of Bohemia and those of Moravia cannot be placed on the same level as the Russians and the Poles; on the other hand, Lusatians, Czechs, Moravians and Slovaks *do* seem to be the offshoots of one single ethnical stock. According to M. Pittard, the Slovenes would appear to be only Slavified; a large proportion of them can be attached to the Adriatic or Dinaric race. The Croats and the Serbs used to form one single group; many of them must belong to this same Dinaric race: they are, again, Slavified people, anthropologically far removed from the Slavs of the North, that is to say, of the districts today considered as the most specifically Slavonic. The same can probably be said of the Bosnians and the Montenegrins. The Bulgars do not represent a pure race, and different origins are attributed to them: Thracian, Tartar, and others; they too are Slavified. In short, and without forgetting the reserves with which M. Pittard surrounds conclusions which he is very careful not to put forward as final—the Slavs of the South are probably not related to the Slavs of the North, and the identity of race of the former is apparently itself unconfirmed. Comparing this picture with the emotive manifestations of Slavonic solidarity which

² *Les Races et l'Histoire*, in the collection "L'Evolution de l'Humanité," pp. 273 sqq.

186* the Slavs were to split up between the two camps into which
 578 Europe would be divided. So that, except in congresses, where
 175 ethnography and philology were discussed, this solidarity remained a myth. Russian egoism bore heavily upon the little 'Pravoslav' countries, in which the Tsarist policy affected to take an interest. Much more than that; certain territories, caught between two Slavonic currents—such as Macedonia, the Ukrainian Marches, the Teschen district of Silesia—kept alive the spirit of dissidence within the Slavonic family.

175 What remained of von Moltke's declarations was the
 167 obsession of an inevitable reckoning between the two races. Germany, who, from age to age, had extended her sphere of domination at the expense of the Slavs, dimly felt that, one fine day, the latter would grow tired of the role of 'fertilisers' (*Düngervolk*) to which the Pan-Germanic school condemned them. In Merovingian times, a slow but continuous migration, by easy stages, peopled the Eastern Teutonic states with Slavs. These tribes had reached the Elbe and the Oder by the fourth century. To designate the Teutonic peoples, they forged the collective appellation, *Niemtse*, which has remained in the modern vocabulary of the Slavonic peoples, and signifies 'dumb ones', i.e., speaking a language unintelligible to Slavs. But, little by little, the ebb of the Teutonic tribes pushed them back. With the exception of a few descendants of the Pomeranians (the Kachoubes and the Slovincs) and of the Sorabes (Lusatians), the vast group of Western Slavs of the Elbe and the Baltic disappeared in the struggle waged against them by the Germans in the four centuries from the time of Charlemagne to the twelfth century.

829 This withdrawal is explained by the state of dissension—a
 167 hereditary defect with the Slavs—in which these populations
 181 lived. An Austrian historian of this century, J. Peisker,¹ was so struck by such a large-scale backward drive, that he sought a different explanation for it. The past, he said, shows such a succession of conquests, and establishments of Teutonism in Slavonic territory, that we cannot attribute it to the fortune of war. We are obliged to suppose the existence of some factor which paralysed the resistance of the Slavs. This factor must

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Russian civilisation is founded on Orthodox Christianity, the Polish on Catholicism. All these theories, among their chief representatives, had no political character; it was a programme of cultural and intellectual solidarity, in no wise a political Pan-slavism. Slavonic Messianism is, scientifically, as untenable as all Messianic aspirations, the Teutonic included'.^a

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For Edward Benes, the Slavonic aspirations had no practical significance, except inasmuch as they furthered a democratic and revolutionary ideal. 'The new Slavonic idea will consider as definitely buried everything that recalls Panslavism, Slavophilia and Panrussianism. . . . It seems to me simply ridiculous to wish to confine Russia and the Russian people within the limits of the "Slavonic policy", of Slav solidarity in Central Europe, and other conceptions of that kind. The role of Russia and of the Russian people is much more vast; the evolution of the world summons Russia to a more important mission. I reject, and especially in the interest of Russia's great mission, all Slavism, and all Slav solidarity which, whether directly or by their consequences, would prove to be purely and simply Russianism or Russophilia. . . . The new Slav solidarity has no desire to fall into the mysticism of the old. It accepts life and the world as they are, and takes as its essential basis the great victory won by democracy during the European War and revolutions. This new Slavism, freed from all the unacceptable ideologies of the past, . . . borrows two great ideas from tradition and from the principle of all the great spirits and all the heroes of Slavonic culture: the idea of democracy and the idea of humanity'.^b

Let us say briefly (and with all the reservations implied in a condensed judgement) that the official position of Czechoslovakia was then dominated by a spiritual assumption—attachment to the democratic conceptions of the West—and by the economic exigencies of a new, highly-industrialised State. Politics based on sentiment and ideology were distrusted—which does not mean (as we shall see farther on) that they were entirely excluded.

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In Yugoslavia, on the contrary, they professed, with varying shades corresponding to the different aspects of internal policy,

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^a T. G. Masaryk, *The Resurrection of a State*, p. 398.

^b Article published in the *Slovenský přehled* (The Slavonic Review) of 113 Prague in 1925, *passim*.

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186* the immanence of the traditional values connected with the Slav ideology. M. Krofta, Joint Minister of Foreign Affairs for Czechoslovakia and intimate collaborator of Edward Benes, reviving the latter's ideas in articles published by the *Prager Presse* on May 6, 1933 and June 9, 1935, declares any positive action by the Slavonic peoples tending to a regroupment to be out of the question, 'unless it should be necessary for them to erect a wall of defence against foreign imperialism'.

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829 From Belgrade, a former minister and propagandist, M. Lazare Markovich, retorted with a certain vivacity. In his view, Slavism clung to its prospect of action. 'Our attachment to the Russian people and to Russia', he said, 'must positively exclude any intimate liaison between Yugoslavia and Germany. Hitler's speech of May 21, 1935 has so categorically stated Germany's attitude that there is no hope of any Russo-German agreement. . . . Unlike our Czech confrères, we do not hesitate to say that we ardently desire, and will work with all our strength to reconstitute in Europe, a Slav policy based on joint action by the Slavonic peoples'.¹⁰

So, while MM. Benes and Krofta considered any political construction of Slav solidarity as romantic and out-of-date, M. Markovich considered 'that there can be no real European entente without the participation of the Slavonic peoples, with Russia at the head'. And, when the Four-Party Pact was signed, M. Markovich advocated the drawing-up of a similar pact among Slavonic peoples, 'in order to place the latter on a footing of absolute parity with the Latins and the Teutons'.¹¹

This controversy, perhaps, reflects less the opposition of two principles than the contrast between two temperaments, Czech realism and Yugoslav emotiveness. Events appear to have given the lie to M. Markovich's thesis (German-Yugoslav *rapprochement*, Moscow Pact). But what we must look at in international life is not the episodes, but the constants; is it not in forecasting the imminent that one runs the greatest risk of going astray?

186* The truth seems to us to lie between the two positions. Slavism is neither a force nor a leading principle of international

• 113 ¹⁰ Lazare Markovich, *Yugoslavia's External Policy*, p. 343 et seq.; *Spirit of Belgrade* of May 14, 1935.

¹¹ *Spirit of Belgrade* of June 11, 1935.

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Editorial Note

Russian progressive and liberal ideologies are discussed by Mr. Elias Tartak in his chapter, "The Liberal Tradition in Russia," and by Mr. Vladimir Zenzinov in his chapter, "The Destinies of Russian Peasantry."

The reader is referred to these two articles, as well as to Mr. Max Nomad's on "Communism."

F.G.

000 The facts and, let us believe, the accidental excesses, reported in *Independent Thought* show the moral impasse in which the ruling political powers of the world found themselves at the end of the war. However, these facts also show something else: that these unfortunate, displaced people, although divided by the political conflicts that separate their countries, were able to forget their dissensions in the name of human solidarity and common European ideals of freedom and justice.

Who knows, indeed, if the sole source of hope for the future does not lie in the misery of these very people, who fought on all the battlefields of the war for their ideals, vainly looking, at the end of their fight, for some recognition of their human rights.

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